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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Testimony of: Paula Altieri
In support of: H.B. No. 5424
AN ACT PERMITTING TWO OR MORE BOARDS OF EDUCATION TO JOINTLY PURCHASE
EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Honorable Chairmen, Representative Andrew Fleischmann and Senator Thomas Gaffey, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

My name is Paula Altieri, Chief Financial Officer for Hartford Public Schools. I am testifying before you today in support of BILL NUMBER H.B. 5424, AN ACT PERMITTING TWO OR MORE BOARDS OF EDUCATION TO JOINTLY PURCHASE EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE.

The cost of employee health insurance has far outpaced the rate of inflation and workers' earnings.

As a result, health care spending is draining a greater share of fiscal resources and diverting critical funding away from schools, classrooms, and students.

In Hartford, and in districts across Connecticut, every dollar driven out of our classrooms jeopardizes our progress in strengthening student achievement and robs our children of their right to the high-quality public education afforded them by the state Constitution.

Hartford Public Schools has made a variety of adjustments to deal with increasing employee health care costs. These adjustments include greater individual cost-sharing, reduction in benefits, higher deductibles and multi-tiered co-payments for prescription drugs. Although these strategies have had some positive effect, they have not been able to reduce or even stabilize the continually increasing burden of employee health care costs.

As a nation, we are charged with finding solutions to address the health care crisis. This bill, H.B. 5424, represents a step in the right direction. It will enable the sharing and pooling of risk categories, provide a united voice and, by extension, a stronger negotiating presence with insurance providers. It will also stimulate regional standards and co-efficiencies resulting in reduction in health care costs for participating districts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on this important issue. Your prompt action in support of **BILL NUMBER H.B. 5424** will be greatly appreciated – not only in Hartford Public Schools, but in districts statewide.

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